

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

SYNOPSIS AGENDA/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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| CODE: | EP-01 |
| COMMITTEE: | Education Professions |
| DATE: | August 9, 2016 |

SUBJECT/TITLE

Recommended Adjustment in Cut Score on Praxis II Examination Mathematics: Content Knowledge (5161)

PURPOSE OF REPORT/REGULATION/ITEM

After reviewing candidate success rates on the Praxis II Examination Mathematics: Content Knowledge (5161) and consulting with institutions of higher education (IHEs) and school districts, the SCDE recommends an adjustment of the cut score on this examination.

CRITICAL FACTS

S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-26-30 authorizes the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt nationally recognized educator licensure examinations and set passing scores for each examination. The SBE previously approved (November 1997) the Praxis II series of content and pedagogy examinations developed and administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) for use in South Carolina.

The Praxis II examination Mathematics: Content Knowledge (5161) was adopted by the SBE with a cut score of 160 effective September 1, 2013. This exam replaced the previously adopted examination Mathematics: Content Knowledge (0061/5061), which was retired by ETS. The cut score of 160 represents the recommended value of the multi-state standard setting study that was completed by ETS prior to the final adoption of the regenerated exam. The goal of any standard setting study is to determine a value that represents the level of content knowledge a beginning teacher should have, in order to be successful entering the profession.

The Office of Educator Services routinely monitors candidate performance on all Praxis II content area examinations and receives feedback from candidates, IHEs, and school districts relative to these examinations. The ongoing review of Mathematics: Content Knowledge (5161) suggests that the cut score may be screening out candidates who can be effective in classroom practice as beginning teachers and whose content knowledge will continue to develop and deepen as they teach. During the 2014-15 academic year, 51.49 percent of test administrations resulted in a passing score; the comparable result for 2015-16 is 50.28 percent. By adjusting the cut score from 160 to 150, an additional 10 percent of candidates will meet the testing requirement to qualify for an initial teaching certificate in this critical need subject area. These are candidates who have successfully completed teacher preparation programs, but are ineligible for certification pending a

successful score on the exam. Anecdotal reports from school districts indicate instances in which districts have continued to employ individuals who have not completed the examination requirement and have paid for tutoring for these candidates because they have been observed as effective in their classroom settings. In some instances, candidates have taken this examination three or more times before earning a successful score.

On August 10, 2016, the SCDE will partner with ETS to host a test review session focusing on this particular examination. Participants include IHE faculty in mathematics and mathematics education as well as practicing teachers. During this session, participants will review live test items and provide feedback to ETS on these items and the test in general. Participants will also gain insight into the test content to determine if the exam aligns with mathematics courses being taught in the high school setting and to determine if the content of college courses is aligned to these topics.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS

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| • September 1, 2013 | Praxis II examination Mathematics: Content Knowledge (5161) becomes effective |
| • September 2014 | OES monitors pass rate data for previous academic year on all adopted exams |
| • May 2015 | OES contacted by South Carolina IHEs regarding pass rate on 5161 and consults with ETS |
| • June 2015 | OES discusses exam 5161 with certification personnel in other states and begins additional review of candidate results |
| • August 12, 2015 | EPC reviews recommendation to adjust cut score on the exam and decides to retain the 160 cut score |
| • May 2016 | Members of the Education Deans Alliance request continued review of candidate performance on the exam and consideration of an adjusted cut score |
| • June 14, 2016 | EPC Chair requests that the OES bring the concern before the SBE at its August meeting |
| • August 9, 2016 | OES recommends adjusting the cut score on this examination from 160 to 150 |
| • August 10, 2016 | ETS will conduct a test review session on Praxis 5161 for South Carolina education faculty and classroom teachers |

ECONOMIC IMPACT

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| COST: | N/A |
| FUND/SOURCE: | N/A |

ATTACHMENTS

Attachments: ☐ yes ☒ no
 (Attachments must be submitted with synopsis.)

Name of Attachments:

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| RECOMMENDATION |
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The SCDE recommends approval for adjusting the required score on Praxis 5161 Mathematics:
Content Knowledge from 160 to 150.

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| ACTION REQUEST |
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FOR APPROVAL: ☒

FOR INFORMATION ONLY: ☐